

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 9
October 9, 2001

FACT SHEET

**Notice of Final Rulemaking to make
Clean Air Act Finding of Attainment Under 179B(d)
California-Imperial Valley Planning Area;
Particulate Matter of 10 microns or less (PM-10)**

Today's Proposed Action

- EPA is taking final action to find that Imperial County has attained the PM-10 NAAQS by the applicable attainment date of December 31, 1994 but for the emissions from outside the U.S., i.e., Mexico. This final action will allow Imperial County to remain a moderate PM-10 nonattainment area and avoid a reclassification to serious. Imperial County is still required to submit a moderate area PM-10 control plan (State Implementation Plan or SIP) and is working with EPA and the State to develop an approvable plan with additional control measures.
- EPA received 10 comment letters in response to its proposal. All of the comment letters supported the finding of attainment except for comments from the Sierra Club which assert that Imperial County has not adequately demonstrated (i.e., with air quality modeling) that it would have attained the PM-10 NAAQS by 1994. EPA's final Federal Register notice responds to Sierra Club's comments.

Background

- Imperial County is located in the Southeastern portion of California and borders Mexicali, Mexico. The principal industries in Imperial County are farming and retail trade. In Imperial County, elevated PM-10 levels can result from disturbance of soils by wind and human activity and from transport from Mexico. Likely PM-10 sources include unpaved roads, waste burning, agriculture, vacant lots, Immigration and Naturalization Service (Border Patrol) activities along the border and transport from Mexico.
- The population of all of Imperial County (approx. 4060 square miles) is about 149,300 and the population of the city of Mexicali (approx. 200 square miles) is over 1 million. The local air district believes that the pollution problems in Imperial County can not be solved without controls on sources in Mexico and that without the pollution from Mexico, Imperial County would have met federal clean air standards.
- Imperial County continues to violate the PM-10 standard today. Many scientific studies have linked breathing PM to a series of significant health problems, including aggravated asthma, increases in respiratory symptoms, difficult or painful breathing, chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, and premature death. PM is also associated with increased hospital and emergency room visits for people with heart and lung disease, absences from work and school, and reduced visibility.
- The Clean Air Act has special provisions for areas which can demonstrate they are impacted by non-U.S. emissions. While EPA is finding that Imperial County would have attained the PM-10 NAAQS but for the emissions from Mexico, Imperial County is continuing to look for ways to reduce their local emissions to help improve public health.
- EPA is also continuing to work with International, State and Local agencies to look for regional solutions to air quality problems along the border.

Further Information

- A copy of the final notice will be available in the Air Programs section of EPA Region 9's website, <http://www.epa.gov/region09/air/> within the next few days.
- For more information, please contact Doris Lo, U.S. EPA Region 9, Air Planning Office, at 415-744-1287; lo.doris@epa.gov.